IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented) A method, comprising the steps of:

(a) polling at least one location in a network to obtain information indicative of a level of utilization of said at least one location;

(b) computing a status of utilization of said at least one location based on said polled information and assigning a decision policy to said status;

(c) assessing a priority level of a new voice call requesting to enter the network relative to priorities of existing calls on the network; and

(d) invoking said decision policy on the new voice call according to its relative priority level to the existing calls on the network and the decision policy in effect at the time the new voice call requests entry to the network.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein a first party initiating the new voice call is checked for proper authorization to initiate the new voice call.

3. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein a second party receiving the new voice call is checked for proper identification and registration in a network transmitting the new voice call.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein if the priority level of an the existing call being entertained by a second party is lower than the priority level of the new voice call being initiated by a first party a preemption message is sent to the second party.

5. (previously presented) A computer readable medium containing a program which, when executed, performs an operation of managing voice calls of different types of priority levels, the operation comprising:

(a) polling at least one location in a network to obtain information indicative of a level of utilization of said at least one location;

(b) computing a status of utilization of said at least one location based on said polled information and assigning a decision policy to said status;

(c) assessing a priority level of a new voice call requesting to enter the network relative to priorities of existing calls on the network; and

(d) invoking said decision policy on the new voice call according to its relative priority level to the existing calls on the network and the decision policy in effect at the time the new voice call requests entry to the network.

6. (original) The method of claim 4 wherein the second party terminates the existing call and the decision policy is invoked on the new voice call to determine its connection status to the second party.

7. (original) The method of claim 4 wherein if the priority of the existing call is higher than the priority of the new voice call, the new voice call is rejected.

8. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising after step (a) but before step (b), step (a1) includes polling the network to determine routing paths.

9. (original) The method of claim 8 further comprising after step (a1), determining if a status of variables selected from the group consisting of links and paths have changed since a previous update to assign the policy decision.

10. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the policy decision includes sub-decisions of never blocking new voice calls having at least a highest relative priority, blocking a first percentage of new voice calls when a system link utilization exceeds a first percentage of system capacity for calls of an intermediate relative priority and blocking a

second percentage of new voice calls when link utilization exceeds a second percentage of system capacity for calls of a low relative priority level.

11. (original) The method of claim 10 wherein there are five relative priority levels and the policy decision includes sub-decisions of never blocking new voice calls having highest or second highest relative priority, blocking 100% of new voice calls when the system link utilization exceeds 99% of system capacity for calls of third highest relative priority, blocking 100% of calls when link utilization exceeds 97% of system capacity for calls of a fourth highest relative priority level and selecting a sub-decision from the group consisting of blocking 20% of calls when the system link utilization exceeds 90% of system capacity and blocking 100% of new voice calls when link utilization exceeds 95% of system capacity for a fifth highest relative priority level.

12. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the decision policy is distributed to one or more call control devices in the network.

13. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the one or more call control devices are one or more softswitches.

14. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein packets of information that carry the new voice call may be selectively dropped based upon the relative voice call priority level.

15. (original) The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of dropping packets of the lowest relative priority level voice calls when a buffer containing voice call data on the network is at a first percentage of total capacity.

16. (original) The method of claim 15 wherein the first percentage of total buffer capacity is approximately 50%.

17. (original) The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of dropping packets from intermediate priority level calls when a buffer containing voice call data on the network is at a second percentage of total capacity.

18. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the second percentage of total buffer capacity approximately 75%.

19. (original) The method of claim 14 further comprising the step of dropping packets from the highest relative priority level calls only if a buffer containing voice call data on the network is full.

20. (original) The method of claim 14, wherein packets of information are handed in one class of a multi-class system, said one class having a plurality of sub-classes, each sub-class having a respective packet dropping precedent.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, wherein said one class is AFI and said multi-class system is DiffServ.